

UNIQUE GEOLOGY

The Byway's most striking feature is the diverse, and often stark, towering and colorful geology. Of igneous origin, the oldest exposed rocks are part of the Succor Creek Formation, formed about 15 million years ago. Much of this formation is volcanic sediments that came from distant explosive volcanic eruptions with inner layers of sandstone and conglomerates.

Succor Creek Canyon also has petrified wood and the agate-filled thunderegg, Oregon's state rock.

The Leslie Gulch Tuff, a member of this formation, is of local origin and unique within the Owyhee region. As a rhyolite ash-flow tuff up to 1,000 feet thick, it erupted from a volcanic vent, Mahogany Mountain, as a very mobile molten froth filled with hot volcanic gases. This tuff is best displayed in Leslie Gulch as steep slopes and vertical pitted towers and pinnacles resulting from differential erosion.

ADAPTIVE SURVIVAL

On a summer day, the desert may appear void of animal life. Yet, the keen eye may spot pronghorn antelope, mule deer, coyotes and, in Leslie Gulch, the elusive California bighorn sheep. Since the 1965 reintroduction of 17 bighorn sheep in Leslie Gulch, the expanding herd has adapted very successfully to over 200.

The area provides excellent habitat for reptiles such as the leopard and collared lizards. From the sky, raptors search for their next meal. Chukar partridge and dove favor the seeps and springs of the canyons.

The talus slopes of the Leslie Gulch ash-flow tuff support rare plant species. Two species are found only in the Leslie Gulch drainage, Packard's blazing star and Etter's grouse. An extremely rare perennial in Oregon, grimy ivesia, is found at only three sites in the canyon. A relic stand of Ponderosa pine in a Leslie Gulch tributary is a reminder of a once cooler, wetter environment.

HUMAN IMPRINTS

Native Americans long inhabited the Leslie Gulch and Succor Creek areas. The Paiute Indians interacted, though not always welcomed, the early settlers.

The Leslie Gulch name comes from the demise of an early-day cattle rancher. While working his cattle in 1882, Hiram E. Leslie was killed by lightning in what was then known as Upper Dugout Gulch. The old Leslie Gulch canyon road long served as a wagon and mail route between Rockville and Watson, now under Lake Owyhee.

Succor Creek Canyon's earliest homesteaders included the Willard and Ida Dutcher family between 1917 and 1927. They horse-pulled countless stranded cars on the Nyssa-Jordan Valley Market Road built through the canyon. As today, the route went through Rockville, once with a post office. The Rockville School, the second school organized in Malheur County, served students from 1877 to 1969. Today it is privately owned — please respect it.

TRIP TIPS

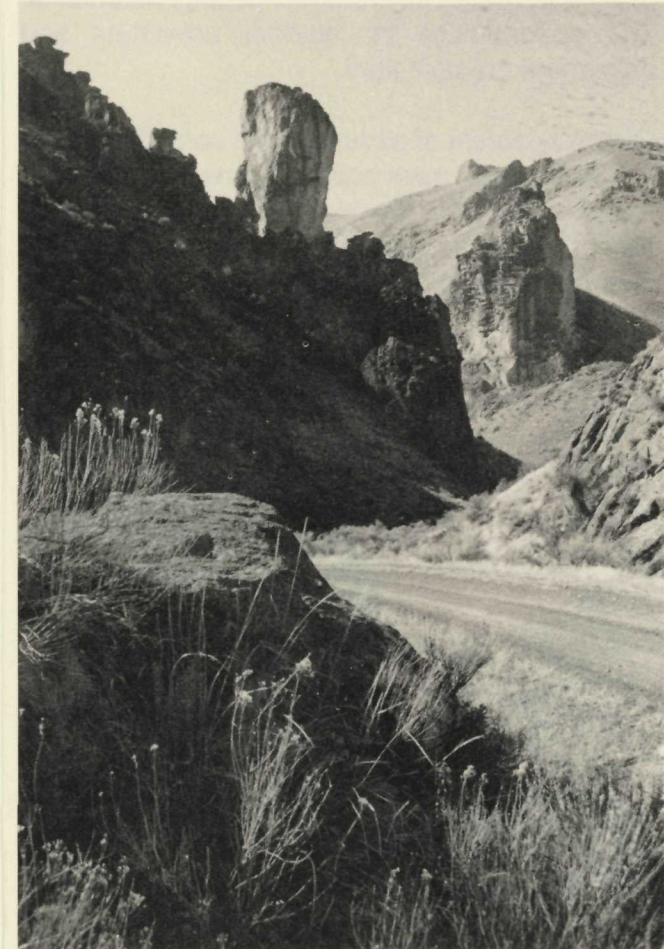
- * "Top off" your vehicle's gas tank and radiator. Check your spare tire. The closest full services are in Homedale and Jordan Valley.
- * Drive only on existing roads. It is recommended that you remain on the byway to avoid becoming stuck, lost or trespassing on private property.
- * Drive defensively. Winding, narrow road segments limit your ability to see approaching vehicles.
- * Take plenty of water. Summer temperatures may cause dehydration quickly. Take warm clothing during colder weather.
- * Camp only in designated areas within Succor Creek State Recreation Area and Leslie Gulch. Restrooms are provided; drinking water is only at Succor Creek.
- * Ticks can carry Lyme Disease. Check yourself after a hike.



Bureau of Land Management
Vale District, Oregon

Leslie Gulch - Succor Creek

National Back Country Byway



Oregon BLM's Back Country Byways

Interested in exploring Oregon's back country, those places often overlooked by highway motorists on their way to well-known attractions?

For those with the time and desire to turn off the beaten track onto a country road, Oregon BLM's Back Country Byways provide access to a diversity of landscapes and attractions just waiting to be rediscovered.

Byways provide visitors the opportunity to view a variety of wildlife in its native habitat, explore remote and often historic areas, or photograph high desert plateaus and snow-capped mountains. The opportunities for outdoor adventure and enjoyment are unlimited.

Over 40 percent of all Americans consider driving for pleasure the most popular form of recreation in the country. BLM Byways let travelers get away from it all and see some of the little-known areas that make Oregon unique and special.



OFF THE BEATEN PATH

The 52 mile *Leslie Gulch-Succor Creek National Back Country Byway* is located approximately 35 miles south of the Vale/Ontario area and about 45 miles west of the Nampa/Caldwell area. It consists of county and BLM graded dirt and graveled roads over terrain of 2,500 to 4,800 feet in elevation. While usually negotiable with a typical family vehicle, a high clearance two-wheel drive vehicle is recommended. Allow 2 to 4 hours travel time for a safe and enjoyable journey.

The roads are not maintained during the winter months. You should not travel the Byway when snowy or wet. The better road conditions are normally from mid-April through October, although rains may occasionally make segments temporarily unpassable. Portions of the Byway, particularly within Leslie Gulch and Succor Creek Canyon, are steep and narrow with occasional turnouts provided. Sustained narrow road grades of 11 percent in upper Leslie Gulch canyon strongly discourages the use of larger recreational vehicles and trailers.

LAND OF CONTRAST

The Byway takes you through some of the most spectacular and rugged landscapes found in eastern Oregon. The country is enriched with unique geologic formations, interesting viewable wildlife and rare vegetation. Its cultural past is fascinating and outdoor recreation opportunities abound.

The Byway passes through Succor Creek State Recreation Area and the Leslie Gulch Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). The ACEC was designated for its outstanding scenery, unique vegetation and interesting wildlife. In the Leslie Gulch area, three wilderness study areas (Honeycombs, Slocum Creek and Upper Leslie Gulch) border the Byway. The Byway includes rolling stretches of open uplands to deep, narrow gorges bounded by towering cliffs and ragged spires. Sweeping views include Owyhee Ridge, Three Fingers Rock, Mahogany Mountain, and Lake Owyhee.

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